

THE KNOW SERIES

Who, What, When, Where, Why, How of the Christian Experience

CLASS # 9

“Thanksgiving”



OBJECTIVE: Thanksgiving is a uniquely American holiday, and it basically was called such after the idea of giving thanks to God. Giving thanks is major Biblical theme and we would do well to constantly give thanks for all that God has bestowed upon us. We'll examine the holiday of Thanksgiving and look at the origin and purpose of holiday celebrations.

The story of the Pilgrims and Thanksgiving is the story of Christianity in the origins of our nation. It is true that not everyone coming to the “New World” came for religious reasons, many came for a new beginning, hopes for economic prosperity and other reasons. It is also true that not everybody always had the best of relations with the native peoples already inhabiting the land. There was however good will and good relationships initially with the Native American people and the Pilgrims. But that those who came to Plymouth Rock for religious reasons is disputed by nobody. After some very severe trials they found an opportunity to give thanks to God and have left us with the tradition of Thanksgiving.

We have a Thanksgiving service, which is a meeting of giving thanks, and an opportunity to share with those who might not have as much as us. Encourage any of the students who can to come out and help us either Wednesday evening or Thursday during the day. There is plenty to do.

We'll be provided you with a curriculum for this day that explains clearly the Christian origins of the holiday.

Thanksgiving Day is observed each year as a national holiday on the fourth Thursday of November (between November 22nd and 28th).

The Historical Events that Created the Holiday

Thanksgiving Day originated with the Pilgrims who settled in Plymouth, Massachusetts in the early 1600s. The Pilgrims were devout Christians who wanted to



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separate themselves from the established Church of England. In 1620 they emigrated to America to build their own church in a new land so that they could have freedom of worship.

Shortly after the Pilgrim colony was established in Plymouth the English settlers received help from friendly Indians. Samoset, an English-speaking chief from Maine who was visiting Massasoit, a local chief friendly to white men, built a bridge of friendship between the Pilgrims and the neighboring tribe. He also introduced them to Squanto, an Indian who would later be described by the Pilgrim leader as "a special instrument sent of God for their good, beyond their expectation." Prior to the arrival of the Pilgrims, Squanto worked with English traders as an interpreter and even visited England on two occasions. Upon returning from his second visit, he discovered that his whole tribe had died due to a plague. Living with a neighboring tribe, he "adopted" the English Pilgrims and taught them how to survive in the new land.

In April of 1621 Squanto taught the Pilgrims how to plant corn the Indian way, and by harvest time in the autumn they realized they had more than enough corn to get them through the second winter. As their leader, Governor William Bradford declared that a day of public Thanksgiving should be observed in October. The Indian chief Massasoit and ninety of his men not only came for the festivities, they hunted for much of the food: five deer and more than twelve turkeys.

INTRO:

* What do we know about thanksgiving.

* Why it is called "Thanksgiving"

(I)

A) The dictionary says this about them:

- 1) A day on which custom or the law dictates a halting of general business activity to commemorate or celebrate a particular event.
- 2) A religious feast day; a holy day. HOLIDAY = Holy Day
- 3) A day free from work that one may spend at leisure; a day off.

(II) THERE ARE AT LEAST THREE KINDS OF "HOLIDAYS" CELEBRATED IN THE UNITED STATES TODAY



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A) _____ Holidays

- 1) Veterans' Day
- 2) Independence Day
- 3) Various Nations has different ones...

B) _____ Holidays

- 1) Christmas
- 2) Thanksgiving
- 3) Easter

C) Holiday

- 1) New Year's Day

(III) OUR BASIC HOLIDAYS ON THE CALENDAR IDENTIFIES AS EITHER

(1) NATIONAL (2) RELIGIOUS (3) UNIVERSAL

(Choose below what kind of holiday these days are)

- 1) New Years Day
- 2) Martin Luther King Day (January)
- 3) Presidents Day (February)
- 4) Easter (March or April)
- 5) Memorial Day (May)
- 6) US Independence Day (July 4th)
- 7) Labor Day (September)
- 8) Columbus Day (October)
- 9) Veterans Day (November)
- 10) Thanksgiving (November)
- 11) Christmas (December)
- 12) Of course there are many other possibilities such as Mother's Day, Father's Day, etc. But the ones above are the recognized ones we celebrate.

B) After talking about the different holidays try and determine what kind of holiday Thanksgiving is.



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C) Thanksgiving is a Christian holiday of American origin. It was a day when after much struggles the early Pilgrims “gave thanks” to God for all He had provided.

(IV) DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

A) Explain what you knew about the reasons the Pilgrims came to America.

B) What did you think about what Abraham Lincoln said about Thanksgiving?

C) Were you aware that in the past God had been such an open part of Thanksgiving and that thanks to God was the purpose of the day?

D) What did you think about the paragraph by Lincoln where he spoke of God judging us for our national sins yet still being gracious to us?

(VI) SPEND SOME TIME GIVING THANKS OR READING A FEW OF THESE SCRIPTURES WHICH TALK ABOUT GIVING THANKS

Psalm 30:12

that my heart may sing to you and not be silent.
O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever.

Psalm 35:18

I will give you thanks in the great assembly;
among throngs of people I will praise you.

Psalm 75:1

For the director of music. To the tune of "Do Not Destroy."
A psalm of Asaph. A song.

We give thanks to you, O God,
we give thanks, for your Name is near;
men tell of your wonderful deeds.

Psalm 79:13

Then we your people, the sheep of your pasture,
will praise you forever;
from generation to generation



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we will recount your praise.

Psalm 105:1

Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name;
make known among the nations what he has done.

Psalm 106:1

Praise the Lord.

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

Psalm 106:47

Save us, O Lord our God,
and gather us from the nations,
that we may give thanks to your holy name
and glory in your praise.

Psalm 107:1

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

Psalm 118:1

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

Psalm 118:29

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

